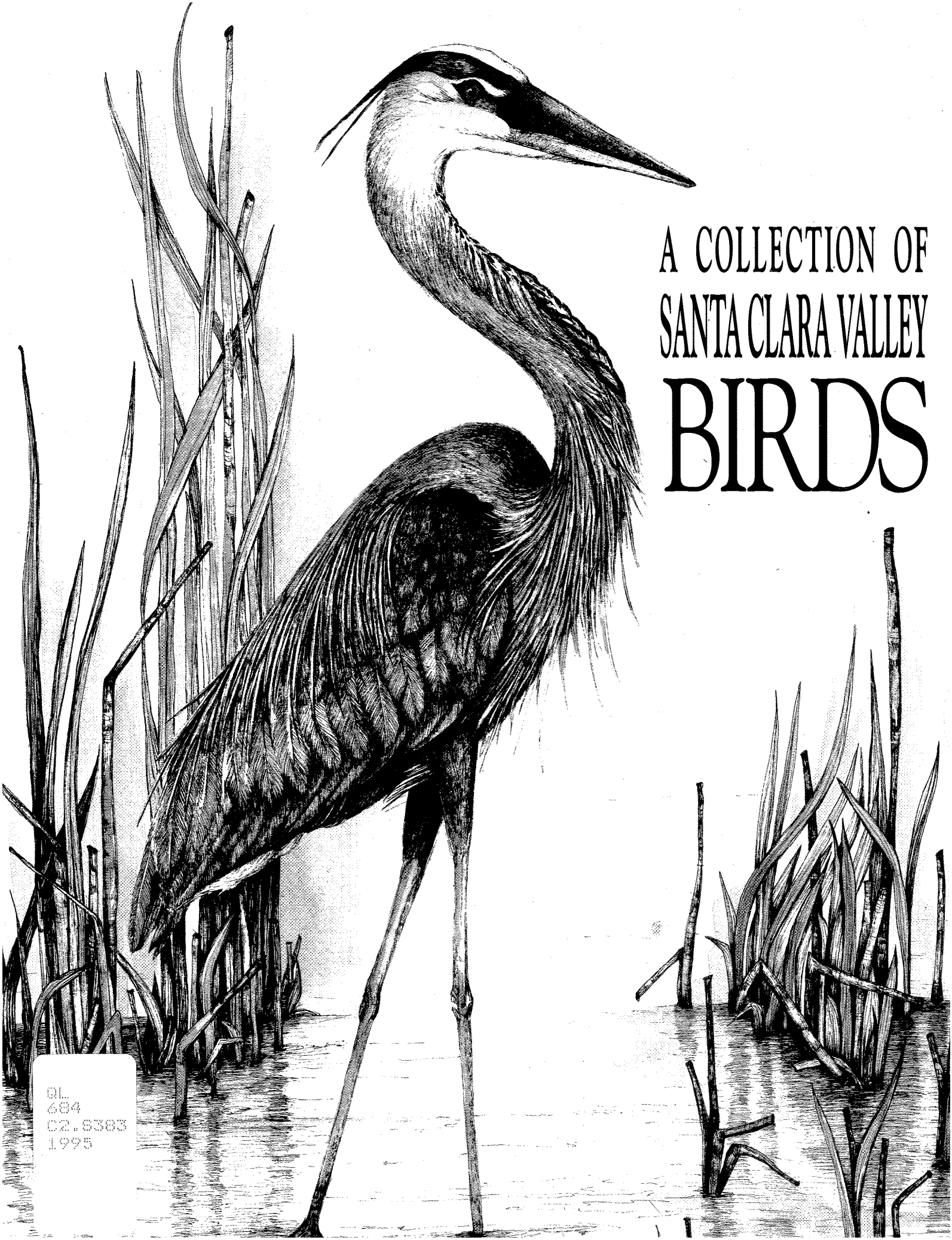

A COLLECTION OF SANTA CLARA VALLEY BIRDS

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The 14 local birds illustrated in *A Collection of Santa Clara Valley Birds* can be found in the valley's wetlands, streams, rivers, lakes, parks, and even in your own backyard. Many use the Pacific Flyway during migration south in the fall and north in the spring. To use and enjoy this book, you need not be an expert bird watcher. All you need is an interest in the outdoors and the creatures who live there. This guide is designed to create an interest and appreciation of the birds that share the Santa Clara Valley with us.

All of the birds illustrated in this booklet may be found on Santa Clara Valley Water District properties. Reservoirs and percolation ponds are a favorite home of many varieties of birds and other wildlife. To learn more see the reference section in the back of the booklet. Enjoy!!!

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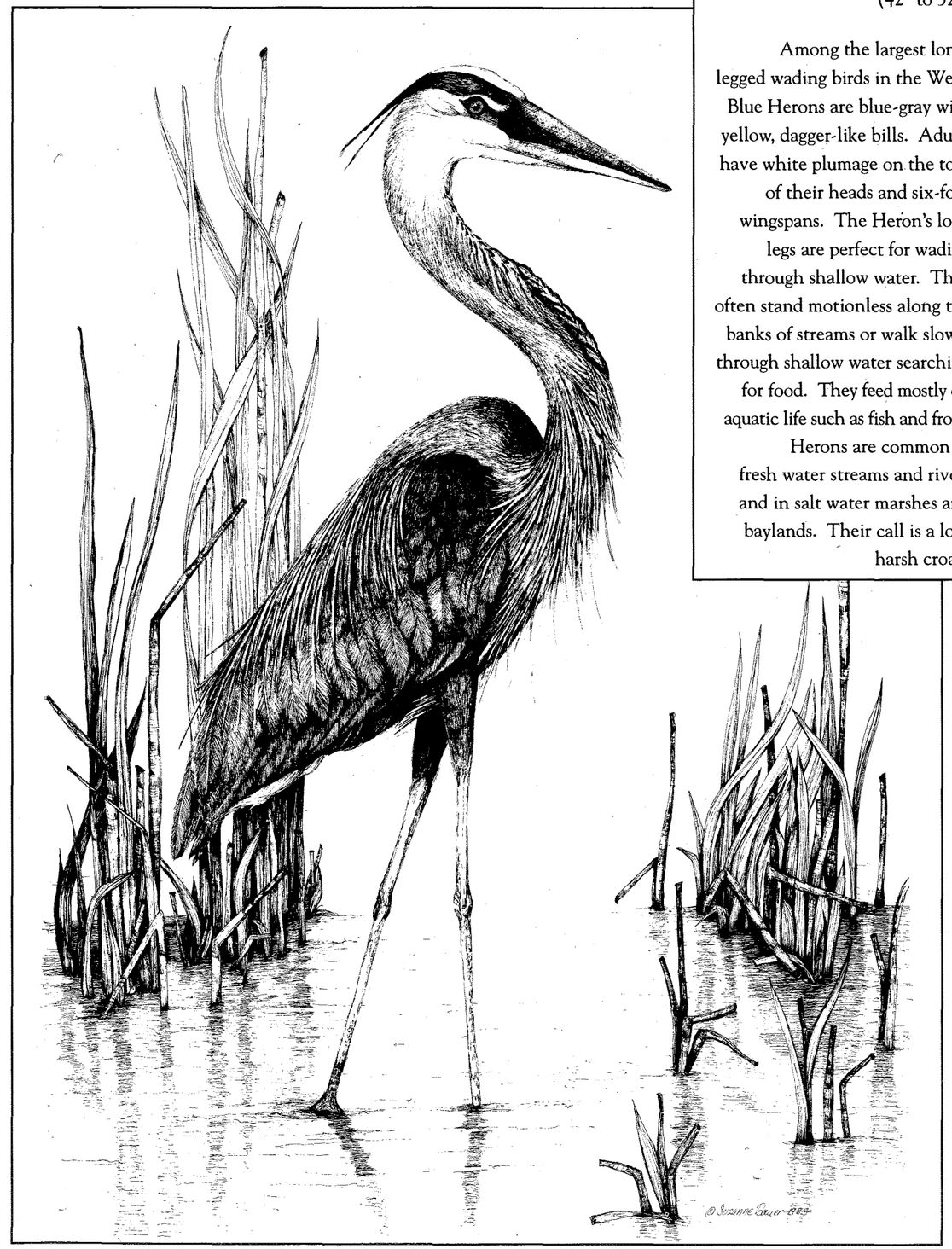


GREAT BLUE HERON
(42" to 52")

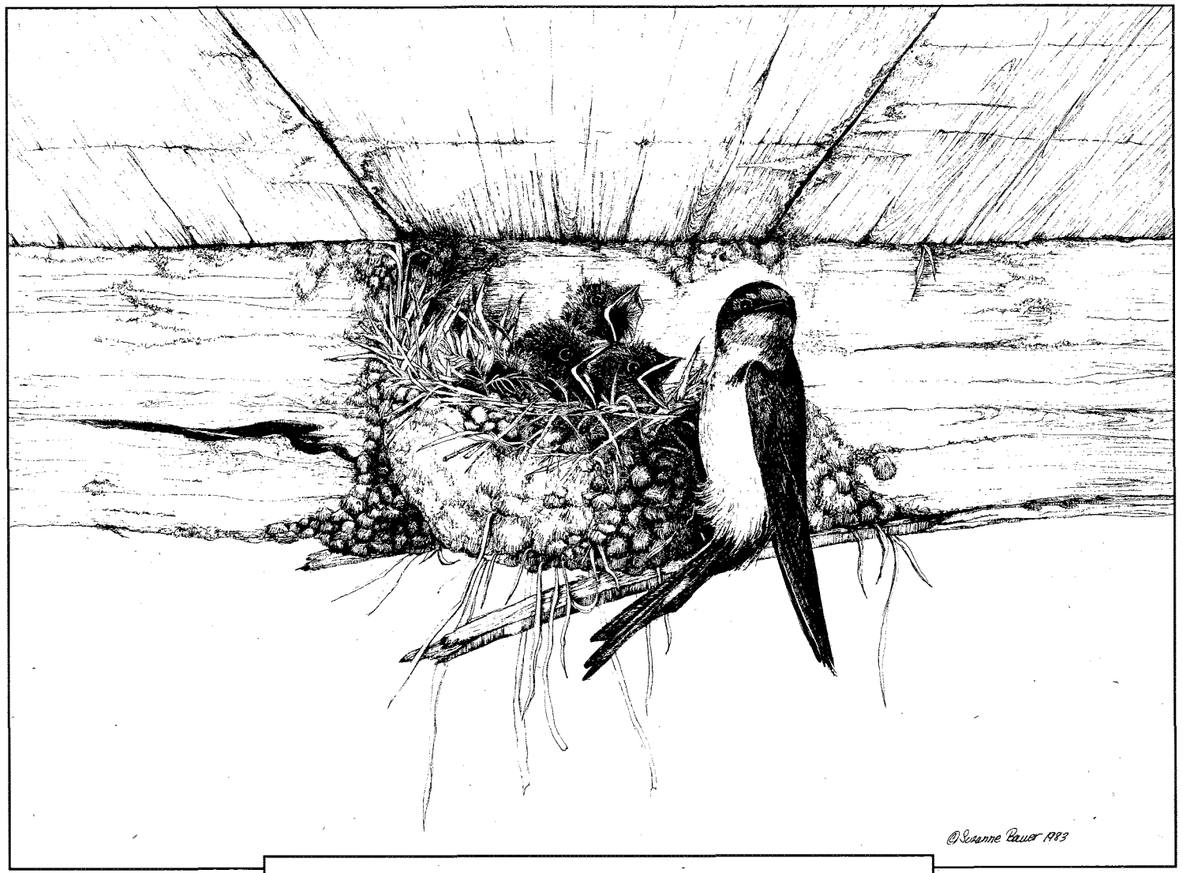
Among the largest long-legged wading birds in the West, Blue Herons are blue-gray with yellow, dagger-like bills. Adults have white plumage on the tops of their heads and six-foot wingspans. The Heron's long legs are perfect for wading through shallow water. They often stand motionless along the banks of streams or walk slowly through shallow water searching for food. They feed mostly on aquatic life such as fish and frogs. Herons are common in fresh water streams and rivers and in salt water marshes and baylands. Their call is a low, harsh croak.

OSPREY
(21" to 24 1/2")

Osprey are large hawks with black backs, white breasts and dark stripes on their wings. They have large powerful talons for grasping prey. They are the only hawks that feed only on fish.

Osprey hunt by hovering over lakes or streams and plunging feet-first into the water for fish. They live along the coast and near inland lakes and rivers. Their call is a loud, high whistle.

Osprey build their nests in the tops of large trees or on man-made platforms. They return year after year to the same nest. Their breeding success has diminished due to contamination of fish; however, the population is making a steady recovery. They are migratory birds that fly great distances along the Pacific Flyway in the spring and fall.

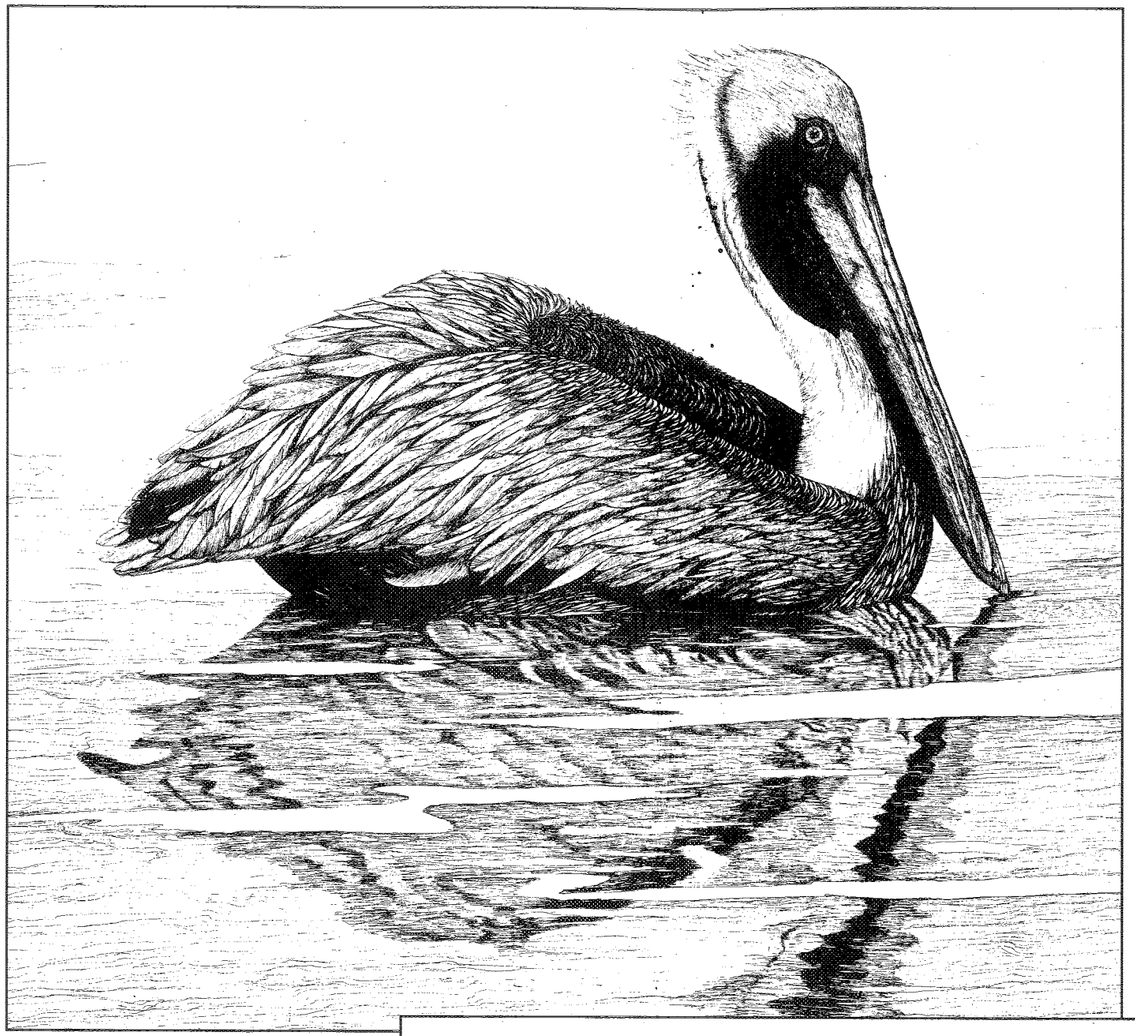


BARN SWALLOW
(5 3/4" to 7 3/4")

These are the only swallows in the United States that are truly swallow-tailed. Their tails are long and deeply forked, with whitish spots. Their backs are blue-black and they have cinnamon-buff undersides and dark throats.

Swallows are swift, elegant and graceful in flight. They "hawk or soar" low to the ground over farms and meadows or over water, catching insects in flight. Swallows build mud and straw nests in the eaves of barns and other buildings often quite close to people. Their song is a long, rapid chirping.

Barn Swallows are the most popular birds in Europe, where they nest under the eves of houses. Disturbing their nests is believed by some people to bring harm to the human occupants.

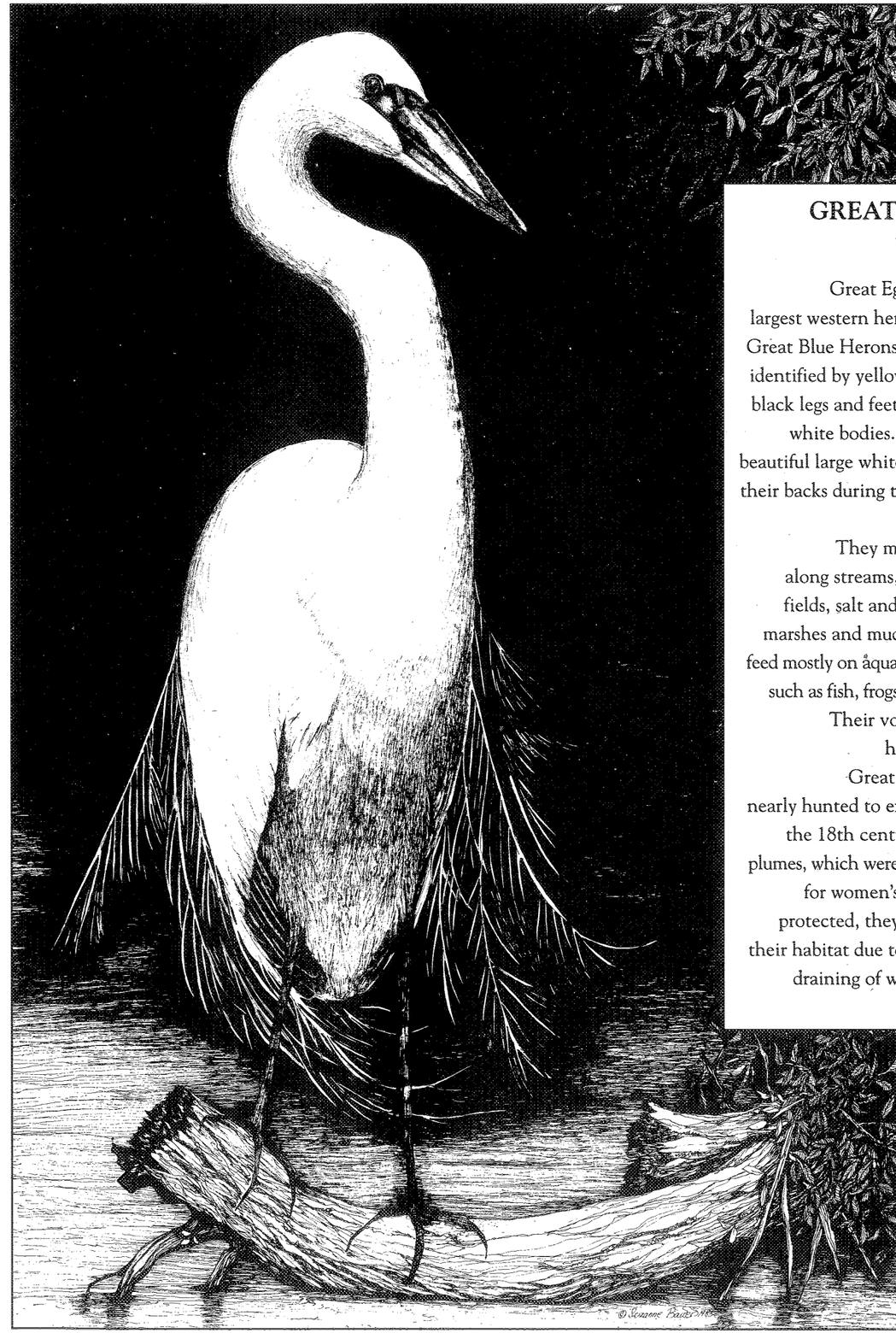


BROWN PELICAN
(45" to 54")

Brown Pelicans are large aquatic birds with wingspans of 6 1/2 feet. Adult Pelicans are grayish-white with white throats and heads. They have very large beaks for catching fish. They are easily recognized in flight by their flap and sail patterns, short tails and S-shaped necks. Adults are generally silent.

Pelicans can be seen sitting on rocks, posts and boats, or flying low in single file over water. They dive straight down into the water for food and use their great pouches to suck in small fish. They may be seen in baylands and along ocean shores.

These birds were once threatened with extinction by the effects of the pesticide DDT, which caused thin egg shells. The Brown Pelican's breeding has been much improved since DDT was banned in the United States.

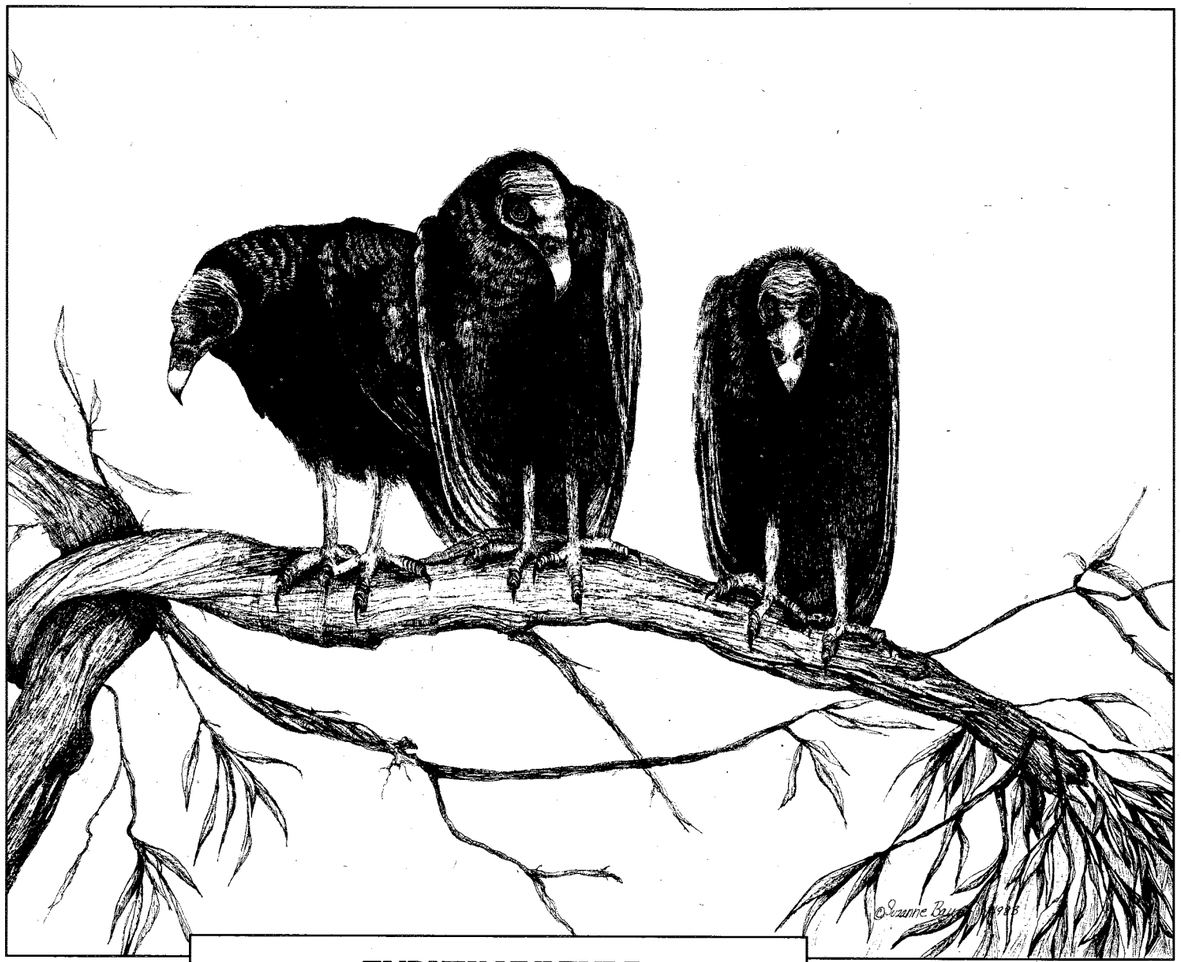


GREAT EGRET
(37" to 41")

Great Egrets are the largest western herons next to Great Blue Herons. Egrets are identified by yellow bills, long black legs and feet, and snow-white bodies. They have beautiful large white plumes on their backs during the breeding season.

They may be found along streams, ponds, rice fields, salt and fresh water marshes and mudflats. They feed mostly on aquatic creatures such as fish, frogs and snakes. Their voice is a low, hoarse croak.

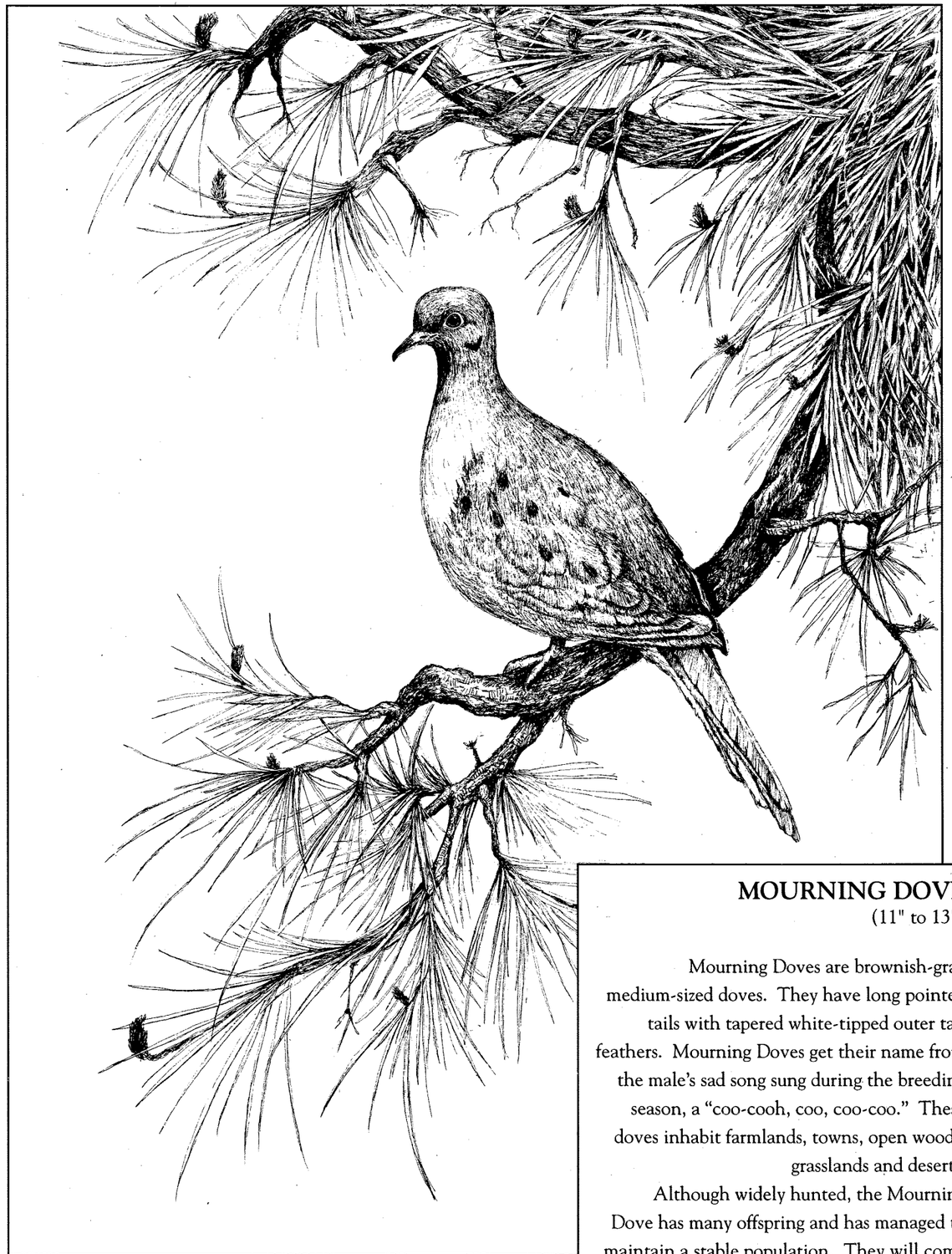
Great Egrets were nearly hunted to extinction in the 18th century for their plumes, which were fashionable for women's hats. Now protected, they face loss of their habitat due to continued draining of wetlands and marshes.



TURKEY VULTURE
(26" to 32")

Among the largest birds of prey in California, Turkey Vultures are about the size of eagles. They have six foot wing-spans. They are brown-black overall with small, naked red necks. They hiss or grunt when threatened, but are usually silent.

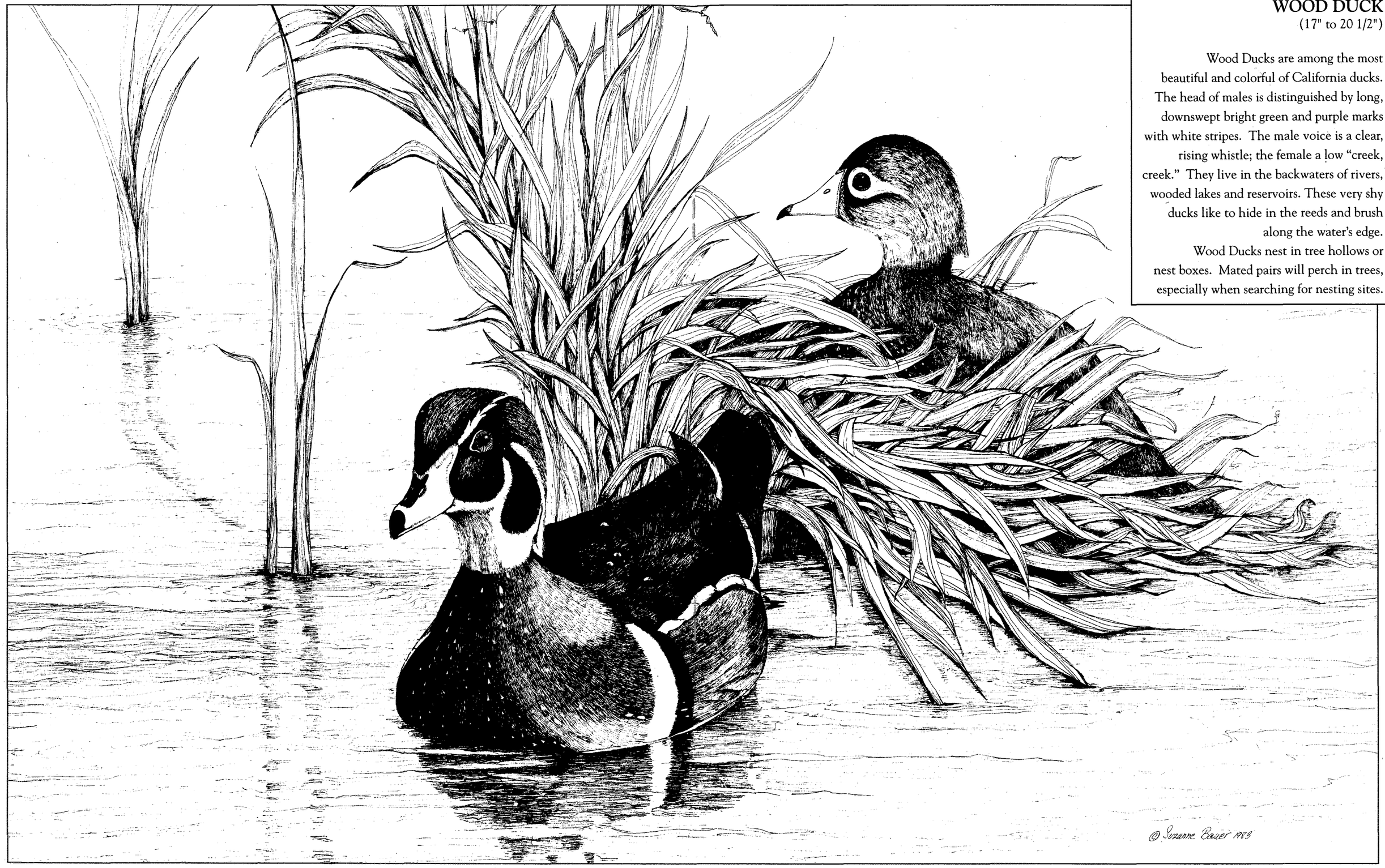
They soar in wide circles with their wings held in a slight V-shape and their bodies rocking and tilting unsteadily. Turkey Vultures are scavengers feeding only on carrion found in fields, along roadsides and in open spaces. As scavengers, they serve a very useful purpose by ridding areas of dead animals which can carry disease. Their intestines produce special bacteria-eating enzymes which clean away diseases as they digest food.



MOURNING DOVE
(11" to 13")

Mourning Doves are brownish-gray medium-sized doves. They have long pointed tails with tapered white-tipped outer tail feathers. Mourning Doves get their name from the male's sad song sung during the breeding season, a "coo-cooh, coo, coo-coo." These doves inhabit farmlands, towns, open woods, grasslands and deserts.

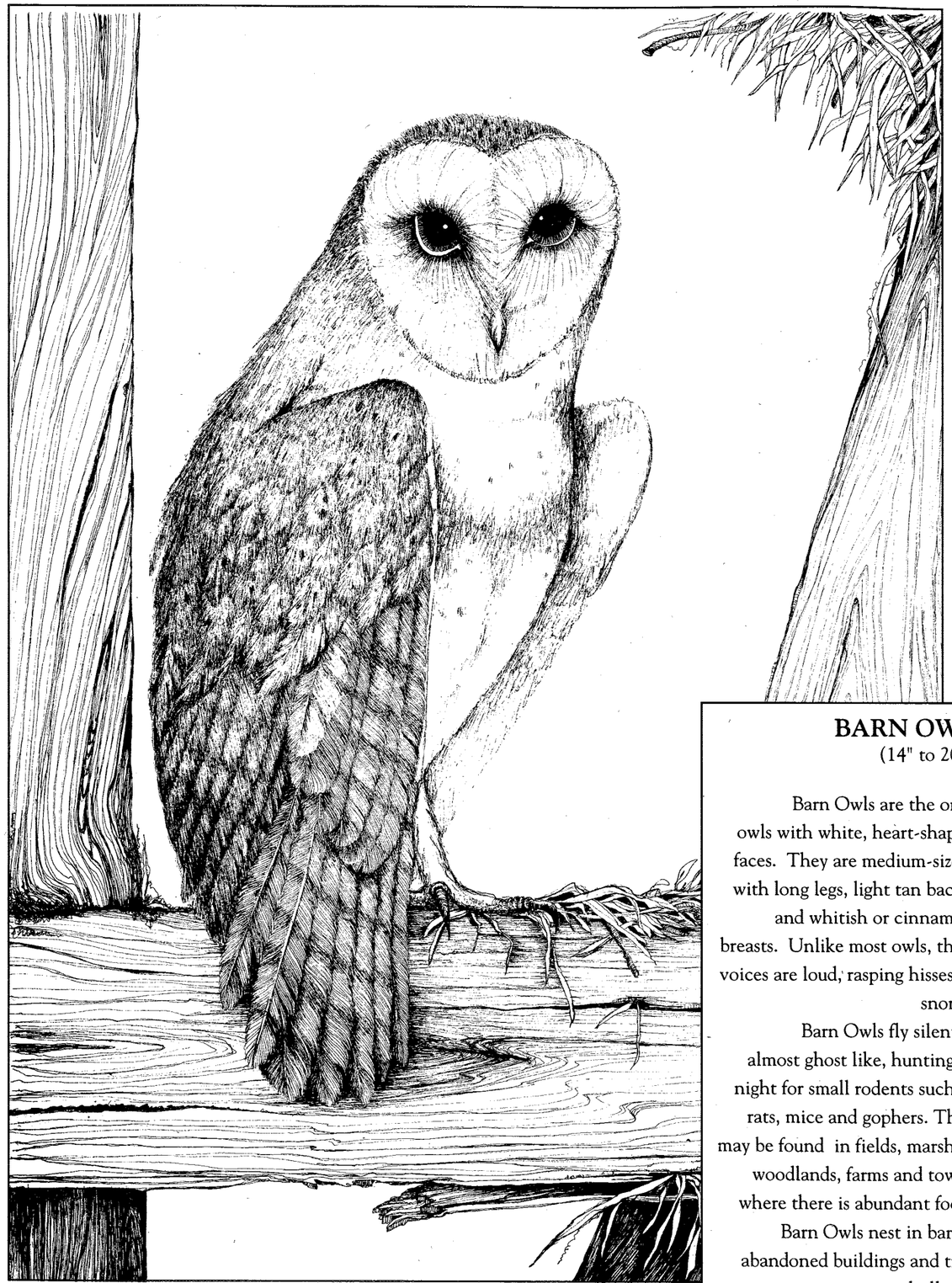
Although widely hunted, the Mourning Dove has many offspring and has managed to maintain a stable population. They will come to grain feeders or grain spread on the ground.



WOOD DUCK
(17" to 20 1/2")

Wood Ducks are among the most beautiful and colorful of California ducks. The head of males is distinguished by long, downswept bright green and purple marks with white stripes. The male voice is a clear, rising whistle; the female a low "creek, creek." They live in the backwaters of rivers, wooded lakes and reservoirs. These very shy ducks like to hide in the reeds and brush along the water's edge.

Wood Ducks nest in tree hollows or nest boxes. Mated pairs will perch in trees, especially when searching for nesting sites.

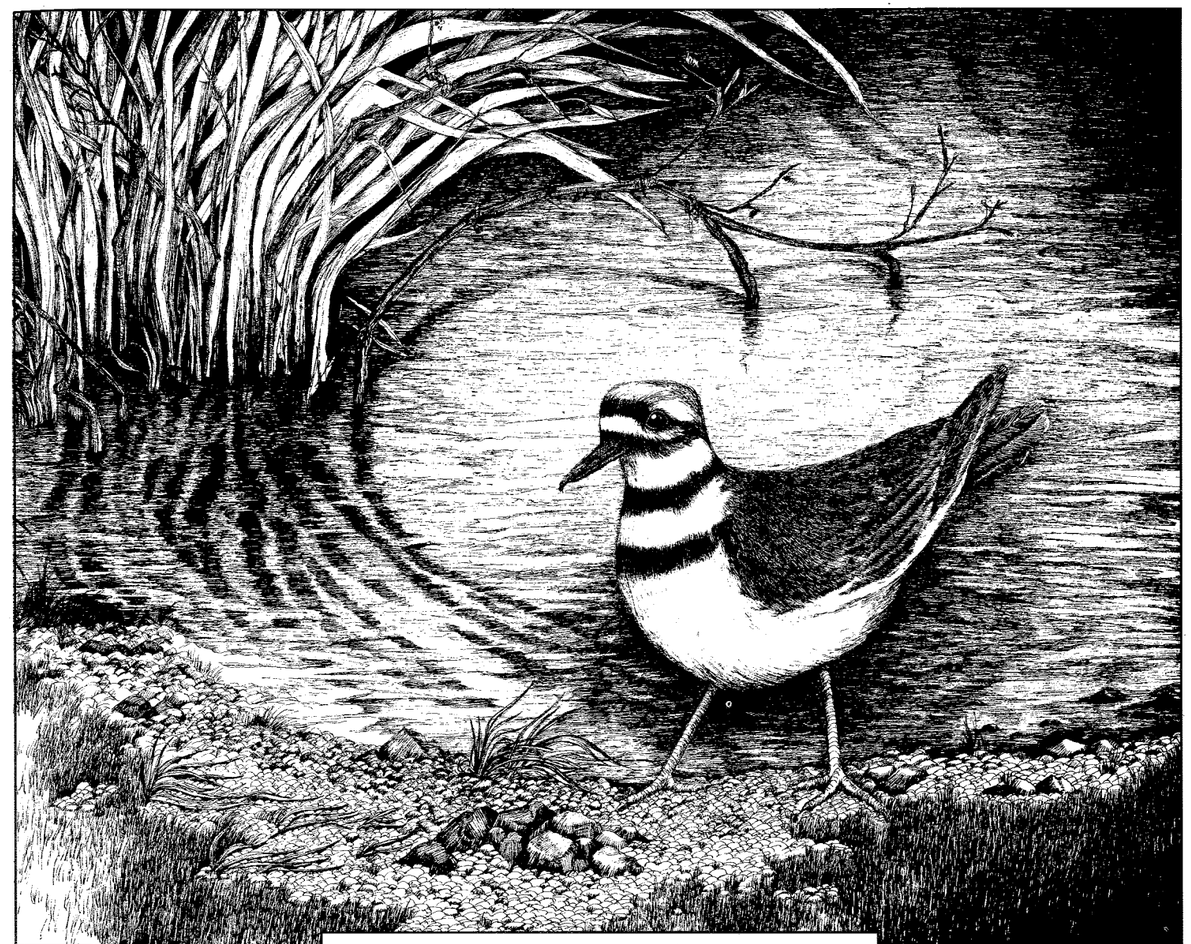


BARN OWL
(14" to 20")

Barn Owls are the only owls with white, heart-shaped faces. They are medium-sized, with long legs, light tan backs, and whitish or cinnamon breasts. Unlike most owls, their voices are loud, rasping hisses or snores.

Barn Owls fly silently, almost ghost like, hunting at night for small rodents such as rats, mice and gophers. They may be found in fields, marshes, woodlands, farms and towns where there is abundant food.

Barn Owls nest in barns, abandoned buildings and tree hollows.



KILLDEER
(9" to 11")

Killdeers can be identified by two neck bands, grayish-brown backs and white breasts. They have long, golden-red tail feathers. They are noisy birds, that repeat a shrill "killdeer, killdeer" or a sad "dee-ee (rising) dee-dee-dee." They nest on the ground and have been known to even use parking lots for nesting.

Although they are considered shore birds they are also common in fields and pastures, lawns, stream banks, gravel beaches and even along railroad tracks.

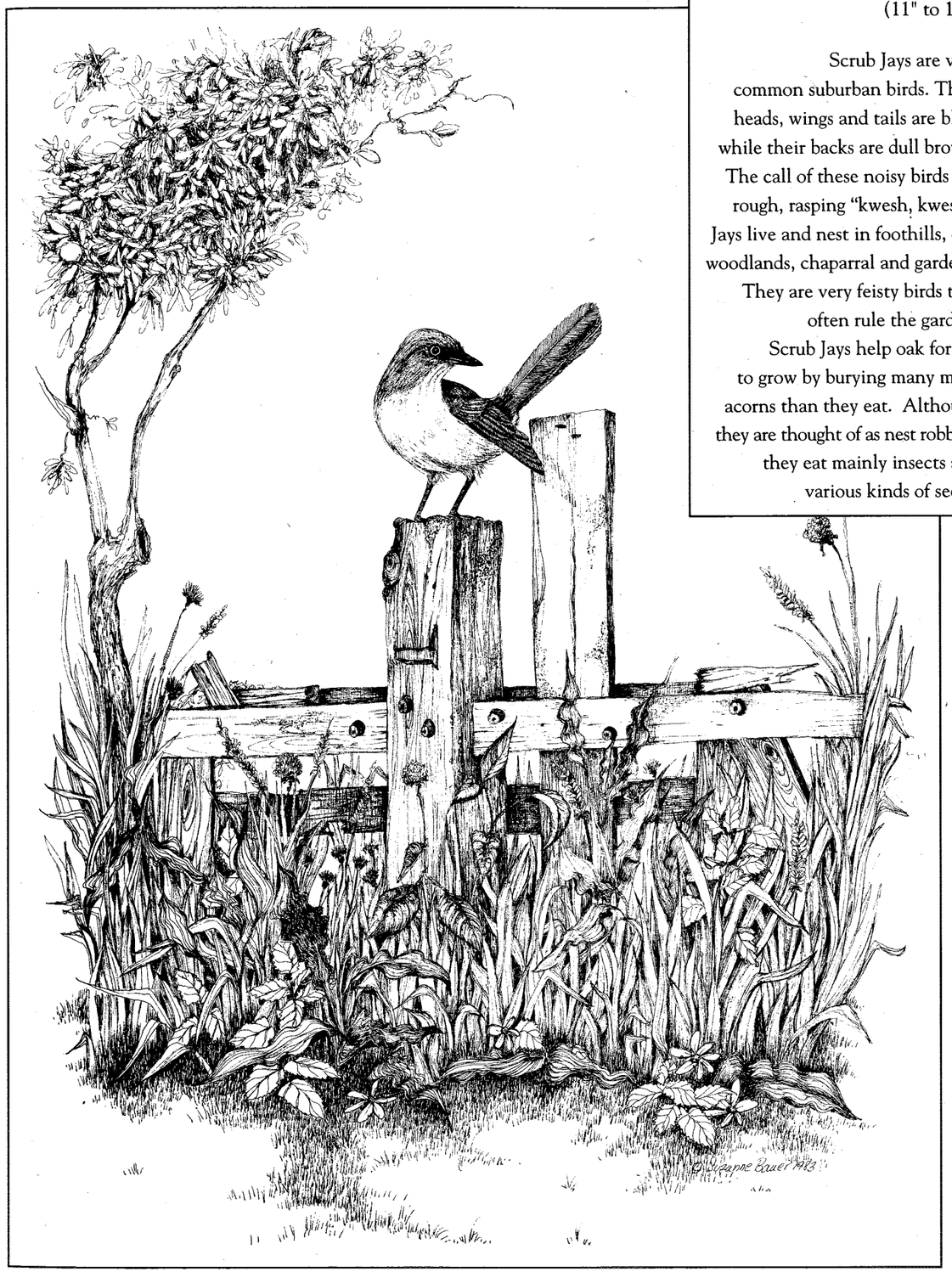
When threatened, Killdeers fake injury by dragging themselves on one foot with their wings appearing broken and tails fanned toward the intruder. This display is effective in keeping animals away from their nests or young.

CEDAR WAXWING
(6 1/2" to 8")

Cedar Waxwings are small, brown birds with soft, sleek, velvety feathers, crests or plumes on their heads and "masked" faces. Cedar Waxwings derive their name from the waxy red tips on their wing feathers. Their voice is a thin lisp.

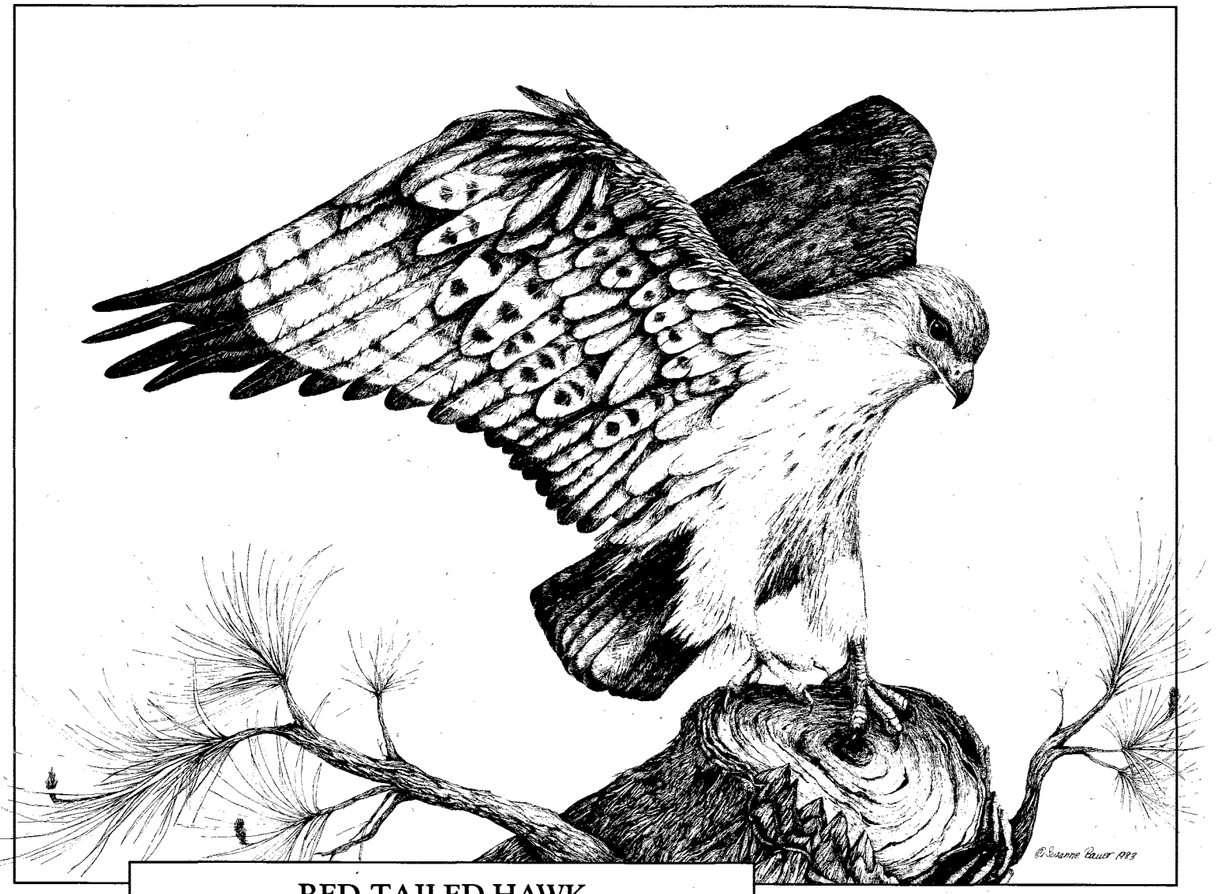
Cedar Waxwings are very gregarious birds that fly in flocks. They live on the edges of forests, orchards and city parks where fruit or berry-bearing trees and shrubs are plentiful. Their main diet is berries, which they often pass from one to another.

During winter migration, they travel in small flocks flying from tree to tree searching for food.



SCRUB JAY
(11" to 13")

Scrub Jays are very common suburban birds. Their heads, wings and tails are blue, while their backs are dull brown. The call of these noisy birds is a rough, rasping "kwesh, kwesh." Jays live and nest in foothills, oak woodlands, chaparral and gardens. They are very feisty birds that often rule the garden. Scrub Jays help oak forests to grow by burying many more acorns than they eat. Although they are thought of as nest robbers, they eat mainly insects and various kinds of seeds.



RED-TAILED HAWK
(19" to 25")

Red-Tailed Hawks are large, powerful, broad-winged, round-tailed birds of prey common in rural California. When soaring, red on the upper side of the adult tail is visible. They can be found in open country, woodlands, mountains, deserts or wherever there are open areas for hunting and woodlands for nesting. They often perch atop telephone poles or fence posts for hours, waiting to swoop down upon unsuspecting lizards or ground squirrels.

Hawks have remarkable eye sight and powerful talons which make them extremely efficient hunters. They play an important role in controlling the rodent population.

CALIFORNIA QUAIL
(9" to 11")

The state bird of California, the Quail, is a plump, grayish chicken-like bird, distinguished by a dark head plume that curves out over its face. Males are colorfully patterned; females are less boldly marked. Their call is a loud, distinctive "ka-ka-kow."

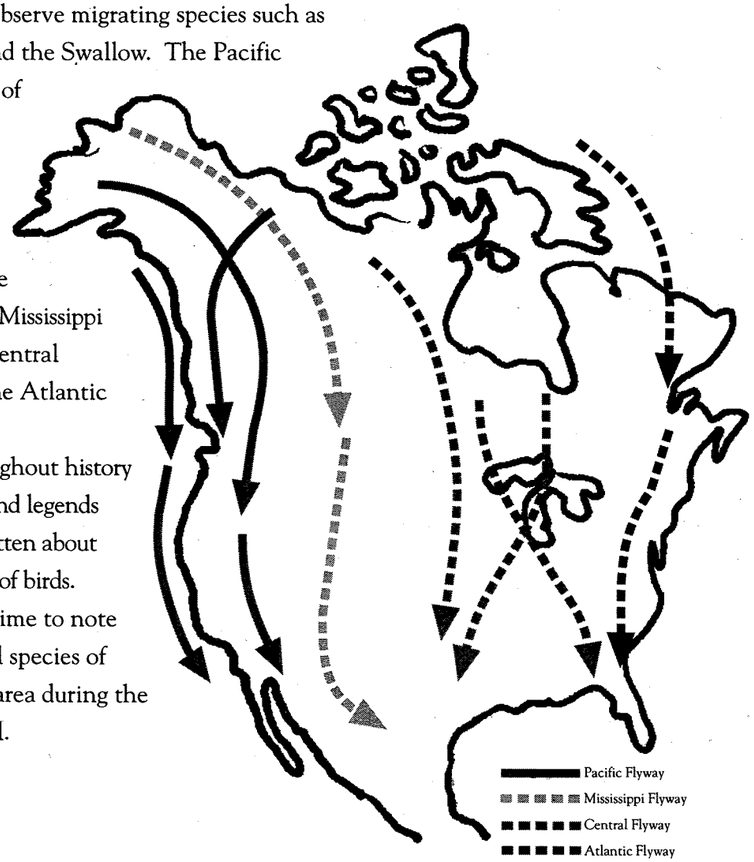
Following the breeding season, Quails travel in flocks or coveys of 10 or more. They perch in trees for safety, but are most commonly seen walking or running on the ground. They are often seen in city parks, meadows and gardens foraging for seeds and insects.

MIGRATION ALONG THE PACIFIC FLYWAY

Some birds do not migrate, but remain in the same region throughout their lives. Others migrate from one elevation to another. Some west coast varieties fly great distances north in the spring and south in the fall along the Pacific Flyway. Little is known about why birds migrate — perhaps a change in the temperature or barometric pressure, perhaps the length of daylight or a change in the earth's magnetic field. Whatever the reason, it is a great adventure for birds and a great opportunity for those of us who live along these "bird freeways" to observe migrating species such as the Osprey and the Swallow. The Pacific Flyway is one of four major migratory routes in North America. The others are the Mississippi Flyway, the Central Flyway and the Atlantic Flyway.

Throughout history many myths and legends have been written about the migration of birds.

Take time to note the additional species of birds in your area during the spring and fall.



If you would like some information about birds in the Santa Clara Valley, here are a few books, places and groups to contact:

PLACES AND GROUPS:

1. **Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society**
   2253 Park Boulevard,
   Palo Alto, CA 94306
   (415) 329-1811
   The Audubon Society is an excellent place to get information about local birds. They sponsor a variety of activities to acquaint novice and experienced bird-watchers with local species. Programs include field trips, discussion groups and environmental education work-shops for teachers.

2. **Youth Science Institute**
   16260 Alum Rock Avenue
   San Jose, CA 96127
   (408) 258-4322
   (408) 867-6940 - Sanborn
   (408) 356-4945 - Vasona
   The Youth Science Institute offers three centers at Alum Rock, Sanborn, and Vasona parks, with programs for schools and the general public. The institute features a museum at Alum Rock, a visitor center at Sanborn and a Water Discovery Center at Vasona. Programs include natural history, science and resource conservation.

3. **City of Palo Alto**
   Lucy Evans Baylands Nature Interpretive Center
   2275 Embarcadero Road, Palo Alto, CA 94301
   (415) 329-2506
   The city offers public weekend nature walks, slide shows, movies, and ecology workshops. School programs are offered during the week (reservations).

4. **Environmental Volunteers**
   3921 East Bayshore
   Palo Alto, CA 94306
   (415)327-6017
   Over 100 professionally trained environmental volunteers work with children of all ages in classrooms, school yards, community centers and nature preserves.

5. **Hidden Villa**
   26870 Moody Road
   Los Altos Hills, CA 94022
   (415) 948-4690
   Provides classroom presentations and day-long nature programs at a working farm and in the Adobe Creek watershed.

6. **Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department**
   298 Garden Hill Drive
   Los Gatos, CA 95030
   (408) 358-3951
   (408) 358-3941 - for park activities
   County parks are open year-round from 8 a.m. until sunset. The park system can accomodate groups for picnics, youth camping and other special events. Call office for park services like nature walks, etc.

7. **Nature Exploration — Tuolumne**
   (415) 324-8737
   Professional naturalists lead programs that combine science, art and history for the general public. Programs include day hikes, backpacking, camping and special activities for single parent families, women and teenagers in group homes.

8. **Peninsula Conservation Center Foundation**
   3921 East Bayshore
   Palo Alto, CA 94306
   (415) 328-5313
   The center houses six environmental organizations including the Audubon Society, Sierra Club, Nature Explorations — Tuolumne, Environmental Volunteers and others. A comprehensive library offers information on environmental issues for the general public and teachers.

9. **San Francisco Bay Natural Wildlife Refuge Environmental Center**
   Grand Boulevard
   Alviso, CA 95002
   (408) 262-5513
   20,000 acres of open space afford classes and groups a great way to learn about the Bay. Available by reservation only.

10. **San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory**
    P.O. Box 247
    Alviso, CA 95002
    A nonprofit research and educational organization studying bird life on San Francisco Bay. Programs offered include bird walks and bird identification classes.

11. **Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District**
    375 Distel Circle, Suite D-1
    Los Altos, CA 94022
    (415) 965-4717
    MROSD has 19 open space reserves with trained volunteer docents who provide natural science tours on several of the reserves.

BOOKS:

1. **Birds of North America**, 1966, Robbins, Bruun and Zim, Golden Press, New York.

2. **A Field Guide to Western Birds**, 1983, Roger Tory Peterson, Houghton Mifflin, Co., Boston.

3. **The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds**, Western Region, 1977, Miklos D.F. Uduardy, Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

4. **Birds of Monterey Bay and Central California Coastal Regions**, 1980, Viola Washburn, Hardy Books, Santa Cruz.

5. **Birding at the Bottom of The Bay**, 1983, Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, San Jose.

6. **The Birds of California**, 1974, Arnold Small, Macmillan Publishing, New York.

7. **The Time-Life Book on Birds**, Time-Life, New York.

8. **The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds**, 1980, John Terres, Alfred Knopf, New York.

9. **Banquets for Birds: Suggestions for Supplementary Feeding, National Audubon Society**, 1983, New York. (Book on attracting birds)

ARTIST:

A Collection of Santa Clara Valley Birds was illustrated by San Jose, California artist Suzanne Bauer.

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